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GOVERNOR

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**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Bristol-Myers Squibb Grant Awarded to Alabama to Improve Mental Health
Services in the Black Belt**

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA – Governor Bob Riley and Commissioner John Houston recently announced that Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation has awarded Alabama a \$1.2 million grant to improve mental health services in the Black Belt.

Proceeds from the grant will be used to reduce stigma, increase access to services and provide additional resources for primary and mental health care in the Black Belt. Fragmentation will be reduced and more “one-stop shopping” services provided for individuals with both mental and physical health care needs.

- Amount = \$1,113,615 (over 12-15 months)
- BMS additional funding opportunities are available for 3-5 years based on outcomes and continuation of governmental, private and institutional partnerships.
- Current Partners are:
 1. Alabama Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation
 2. University of Alabama in Birmingham (Department of Psychiatry)
 3. Community Care Network, Montgomery
 4. National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI Alabama)
 5. University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa) College of Community Health Sciences
 6. Community Mental Health Centers (five centers serving 12 counties in the Black Belt)
- Increase Community Care Network services in the Black Belt including the addition of more Health Fair partnership events, free screening services for physical health and mental health issues and educational forums for rural underserved populations.
- Development of NAMI family support groups in the West Alabama and Cahaba regions. NAMI provides a 12-week family education series to help caregivers provide support and help maintain treatment for relatives in recovery from serious mental illness.
- Increasing the availability of access to services by recruiting more assessment and professional treatment personnel to the region.
- Utilize technology to provide tele-psychiatry services in remote areas. These technologies make it possible for primary care physicians and pediatricians to provide live consultation sessions with participating psychiatrist.
- Enhance education and stigma reduction efforts through a community leader and pastoral training program on mental illness and recovery.
- Improve primary health care and mental health care coordination through better continuums of care across the treatment spectrum. I.e. more social workers and case workers in the community who work with psychiatric hospital discharge personnel in providing wraparound services for patients entering community life.
- Mental health services van with medical personnel will be provided by West Alabama Mental Health Center to provide outreach services primarily in Hale County.

The mission of Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is to reduce health disparities around the world. In the U.S., the foundation has concentrated on reducing mental health disparities by building health care worker capacity and support services for patients at the community level.

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